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Ray to Claim 'Decoy' Role In Murder, Author Says

(By The Associated Press)

The Nashville Tennessean says James Earl Ray, accused of the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., will claim he was "promised '$12,000 to $15,000' to lead police away from the real killers and become the lure in the greatest manhunt in history."

Ray's biographer says the man accused of the sniper slaying of King in Memphis last April 4 was tempted out of a Canadian hideout months before the killing by a $12,000 offer to make a mystery mission to Birmingham.

AUTHOR WILLIAM Bradford Huie quoted Ray about the money offered in the first installment of a series which began yesterday in Look magazine.

The Tennessean, in its editions yesterday, said Ray will claim that he was only a "decoy" in a plot to kill King in answer to the state of Tennessee's contention that Ray acted as a lone assassin.

Ray, an escapee from the Missouri State Prison, goes on trial in Shelby County Criminal Court at Memphis Nov. 12 on a murder charge.

THE TENNESSEAN story, a copyright dispatch by reporter Jim Squires from Memphis, quoted "sources close to the case" as to the line of Ray's defense.

The newspaper said numerous sources have indicated "the defense will claim Ray played only a small part in a master plot so complex and far-reaching that even Ray does not know who masterminded it."

Apparently, no effort will be made by the defense to show who masterminded the alleged conspiracy, the paper said.

THE TENNESSEAN story said the defense theory is that Ray's movements in Memphis were designed to set him up as the killer to leave a false trail while someone else shot King.

Huie said Ray, who has been writing autobiographical notes in his jail cell in Memphis for use by Huie in a book, told him the money offer to leave Canada came from "a man whom Ray calls Raoul and describes to me as being a blond Latin about 35, and whom Ray took to be a seaman." Ray told of a half a dozen meetings with Raoul," Huie said.

Huie quoted Ray as saying the proposition boiled down to this:

RAY WAS TO meet Raoul in Windsor and make several trips across the border from Windsor to Detroit, carrying packages with unspecified contents hidden in the car.

Ray would then sell the car and proceed to Birmingham, where he would lie low, try to establish a false identity and wait instructions by general delivery mail.

Raoul was to pay Ray's living expenses and go to Birmingham to buy Ray a "suitable car."

"After a few weeks or months, after a little joint activity, Raoul would pay Ray $12,000 and give him a passport and 'other identification' and help him to go 'anywhere in the world.'"

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